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MISSISSIPPI FORESTRY COMMISSION
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Laurel Wilt Disease Found in Jackson County

Jackson, MS – Laurel wilt disease has been detected in a Sassafras tree in northern Jackson County, MS. Samples taken on June 6th, 2010 by Dr. John Riggins, assistant professor of forest entomology at Mississippi State University, were sent to Steve Fraedrich, research forest pathologist at the USDA Forest Service's Southern Research Station in Athens, GA. After analysis of 15 wood samples from the suspect tree, Dr. Fraedrich confirmed the presence of *Raffaelea lauricola*, the pathogen that causes laurel wilt disease, in all of the wood samples.

The Sassafras tree is located north of Vancleave, MS in northern Jackson County approximately 3 miles east of the intersection of "Old River Road" and State Highway 57.

Laurel wilt disease was detected in MS for the first time in Jackson County during July 2009 in Redbay trees near Gautier, MS. This new discovery represents the first record of laurel wilt in Sassafras in Mississippi. Residents of Jackson County, and the surrounding counties, are urged not to transport firewood, green lumber or living Redbay/Sassafras stock to minimize spread. For more information, please contact Randy Chapin at the information above.

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